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SUBJECT: CYPRUS TO PURSUE LOW-KEY APPROACH ON TURKISH  
MARITIME ISSUE

REF: A. ANKARA 1986  
[1](#)B. NICOSIA 910

[1](#)1. (SBU) U/S of Energy, Solon Kassinis, told econoff that the recent events involving ships conducting seismic soundings off SW Cyprus and near Kastelorizo Greece and Greek and Turkish warships were "nothing unusual" and should be "downplayed." He criticized Cyprus MFA for calling in the P-5 Ambassadors regarding the incidents, arguing that "this plays right into Turkish hands." The U/S claims he has spoken to President Christofias about the matter and the President has agreed with Kassinis' low-key approach.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Kassinis further believes that sending a ship to conduct geophysical research off Kastelorizo was similarly designed to raise the profile of Turkey's maritime claims at the same time as these claims were being asserted by Turkey off Cyprus. The action of the Greek naval vessel was "rising to the Turkish bait" Kassinis asserted. He encouraged the US and other P-5 nations to quietly urge the Turkish government to exercise restraint in this matter given the sensitivity of the settlement negotiations in Cyprus and the fact that maritime border issues have been a problem for decades. Kassinis says he will ask the seismic ships under GoC contract to pull well back from the northern portions of the blocs they are exploring and may "even send them to Egypt for a month or so."

[1](#)3. (SBU) Kassinis returned to Cyprus on Sunday from a conference in Las Vegas where he quietly (no press) announced the next round of bidding for offshore exploration blocs. He claims major companies, including Chevron, will buy the seismic data on the blocs and he expects them to bid. He will attend a conference in London next week where he will present data to another forty-two energy companies. No media have reported on Cyprus opening the next round of bidding nor has the Cyprus press reported that at the end of October Noble Energy became the first company to agree to an offshore exploration and production agreement with the RoC.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Comment: Kassinis' main interest is ensuring the maximum number of bidders for the next round of offshore tenders. Given the timing of these incidents just after Kassinis made his announcement of the next round of bidding, Turkey's actions do appear designed to make potential bidders back off. The GoC is willing to keep calm and avoid any escalation of this matter, but would appreciate our quietly urging the Turks to show similar restraint. Kassinis fully expects future such incidents to occur.  
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